



Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
Chair

Tim Pawlenty
Governor of Minnesota
Vice Chair

Raymond C. Scheppach
Executive Director

August 31, 2006

The Honorable Bill Frist
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Frist, Senator Reid, Speaker Hastert and Representative Pelosi:

Governors oppose language in the House and Senate Department of Defense authorization bills to federalize the National Guard during certain emergencies and disasters. Provisions in both the House and Senate-passed bills would expand the President's authority during natural and manmade disasters and could encroach on our constitutional authority to protect the citizens of our states. Congress should drop these provisions from the final conference report and work with governors and the Administration to jointly address ways to improve the nation's disaster response capabilities.

Fifty-one governors recently sent a letter to Congress opposing Section 511 of the House-passed bill because it would usurp the authority of governors to command the National Guard in response to a "serious natural or manmade disaster." Since then, governors also have become concerned with the Senate's proposal to expand the President's authority to intervene in a state under the Insurrection Act (Section 1042) and proposals to federalize disaster response through the use of reserve forces. Each of these proposals represents a dramatic expansion of federal authority during natural disasters that could cause confusion in the command-and-control of the National Guard and interfere with states' ability to respond to natural disasters within their borders.

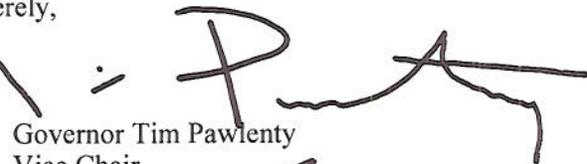
Any issue that affects the mission of the Guard in the states must be addressed in consultation and coordination with governors. The role of the Guard in the states and to the nation as a whole is too important to have major policy decisions made without full debate and input from governors throughout the policy process.

Governors welcome the opportunity to improve the nation's disaster response capabilities, but Congress and the Administration must work with us to ensure that any changes do not hinder our ability to respond to those in need. We urge House and Senate conferees to remove Section 511 of the House bill and Section 1042 of the Senate bill from the final conference report.

Sincerely,



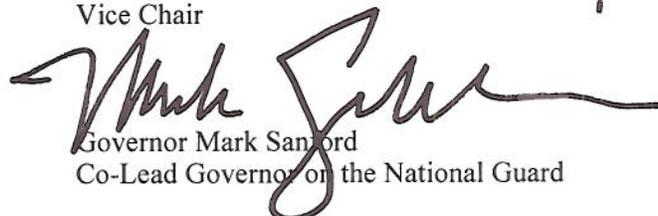
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Chair



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Vice Chair



Governor Michael F. Easley
Co-Lead Governor on the National Guard



Governor Mark Sanford
Co-Lead Governor on the National Guard